

S  
R  
A  
F  
T

F. 18

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: SRG Meeting of Monday, 24 May 1971

1. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room from 1500 until 1630. Those who attended included Dr. Kissinger, U. Alexis Johnson and Charles Whitehouse (acting for Sullivan) from State, the DCI, General Westmoreland representing the JCS, Acting Secretary Packard accompanied by Mr. Selden (Nutter's deputy) for the OSD, and Mr. Schlessinger for OMB. Staffers present included Wayne Smith, Robert Sansom, Dick Smyser and Morris Edmundson of the NSC Staff, a State Department officer whose name I did not get; Lt. General Bennett, Brigadier General St. John and George Fowler, all of DIA and backing up General Westmoreland; Major General Karhohs backing up Messrs. Packard and Selden; Messrs.  and myself for the Agency; and two unidentified strays who presumably were affiliated with the NSC, one of whom seemed to be Kissinger's note-taker.

STAT

2. In theory the meeting had convened to consider the following four papers:

*✓*  
*Glac Chono*  
*NSC Actions*

a. The "Southeast Asia Assessment" paper by the JCS and submitted to other SRG principles by Admiral Moorer on 14 May as CM-899-71.

b. Two OSD papers both transmitted in a 19 May memorandum entitled, "Assessment of the Situation in South Vietnam," numbered I-35580/71. This memo was actually a letter of transmittal signed by Nutter, addressed to the SRG principles and advising them that its two attachments had been forwarded by the Secretary of Defense to the President on 18 May (a rather obvious exercise in bureaucratic gamesmanship). Its two attachments were entitled, "Assessment of the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program" and "A Proposal for Adjustment of the FY-72 and FY-73 RVNAF I&M Program Which Resulted From the Recent MACV/JGS Review and JCS Recommendations Thereon."

c. A 10 May Agency paper entitled, "Manpower Considerations and Hanoi's Strategic Options."

d. A 14 May Agency paper entitled, "North Vietnam's Capability to Continue to Wage War" (ER IM 71-88).

e. In addition to the four papers originally on the agenda, a fifth was added shortly before the meeting itself began. This was a State-DOD production dated 20 May and entitled, "Republic of Korea Forces in Vietnam (ROKFV)."

3. Kissinger opened by saying that the session had been called to bring the various papers now before the SRG into sharper focus. He then asked DIA to brief on the JCS paper (Item a above). This was done by General St. John with the addition of the inevitable flip charts and diagrams. St. John started through the paper but never really finished his briefing since he was frequently interrupted by Kissinger and his presentation eventually trailed off (through no fault of his) into a general discussion. Many of Kissinger's questions were on points of definition and detail but in general he seemed dissatisfied with the JCS presentation which suggested that Cases II through VII were somehow alternates to Case I (Protracted Warfare). After <sup>a</sup>considerable amount of discussion into which Westmoreland interjected himself from time to time, it was generally agreed that protracted war (Case I) was something the Communists were going to do anyway, hence the other six cases represented additional rather than alternate courses of action open to the enemy.

4. After considerable discussion Kissinger asked if there were any further significant differences of opinion with the JCS paper. This

question prompted a triangular exchange between Kissinger, Packard and Westmoreland on the question of air sortie levels. Though it was never explicitly so stated, both Kissinger and Packard apparently felt (with reason) that the JCS effort was at least in part written as an argument in favor of a 10,000 per month sortie level (plus 1,000 B-52 sorties per month) and both had problems with this approach -- though for very different reasons.

5. To everyone's surprise, the only one who took up Kissinger's request for further objections was General Westmoreland, who seemed to forget that the paper into which he lit with considerable heat was in fact a product of the Joint Chiefs whom he was supposedly representing at the meeting. Westmoreland was very concerned about problems in Military Region 1 and questioned the utility of preparing to cope with such problems by moving the ARVN general reserve. He felt that GVN force strength in MR 1 ought to be augmented, perhaps by stripping cadre and equipment from units in the other three Military Regions and using them to raise new units in MR-1. (This prompted a rather tortured discussion of whether such a proposal was or was not a recommendation for increasing overall GVN force strength beyond the 1.1 million level.) During the course of this criticism of the JCS paper, General Westmoreland

got off on the ROK troops, a subject discussed in further detail later in the meeting.

6. After considerable back and forth discussion, Kissinger asked what the GVN's tactical air or troop lift capability would be if or when US forces reached the 50,000 level. He was referred to a table "B-7" which apparently did not exist in all variations around the table. This produced more frantic searching of notebooks and further confused argumentation. Kissinger then said what was really needed as a basis for future Presidential decision was a further analysis of a realistic "worst case" and a "probable case" with respect to enemy activity during the US election period in 1972. He also took obvious umbrage at the basis of much military planning for withdrawal of US assets which, in his eyes, seemed to be guided more by a desire to run a logistically tidy operation than to leave in being the assets necessary to cope with real trouble during the time of US electoral campaigning. Wayne Smith was commissioned to prepare two models of force reduction, one based on purely logistic priorities and the other based on an assessment of what would give us the best chance of weathering "worst case" crises.